and additives including processing aids containing or consisting of genetically engineered organisms or cells, shall not be produced, sold, imported or used except with the approval of the Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC). Thus, import of genetically modified food requires the approval of GEAC. There is no such information available in this Ministry that huge quantities of soya oil extracted from GM seeds is imported in the country.

(d)The Ministry of Agriculture requested the Ministry of Environment and Forests to issue a notification under the Environment (Protection) Act making it binding on importers to declare whether the commodity being imported is of GM or non-GM origin, and in case of GM to obtain a necessary permit from the Ministry of Environment and Forests for its import.

(e) The Prime Minister's office convened an interministerial meeting to discuss issues in biotechnology regulation. The meeting decided that a small group be set up to review the existing structure of biotechnology regulation and suggest measures for changes, if required.

Environment Action Plan for Bangalore

350. SHRI K. RAHMAN KHAN: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Kamataka Government had forwarded an Environment Action Plan for Bangalore city for consideration of his Ministry in the Ninth Plan period; and

(b) if so, whether Government had considered the proposal for clearance under the Ninth Five Year Plan; if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. However, the proposal could not be considered in the Ninth Plan period.

Rejection of Bt. cotton seeds

†351. SHRI RAJIV RANJAN SINGH 'LALAN':
SHRI RAM JETHMALANI:

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the produce of Bt. cotton seeds developed

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

by the Maharashtra Hybrid Seeds Company has been rejected in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu;

(b) if so, the fact in this regard; and

(c) whether it is also a fact that the said company had carried out trial of the production of the said seeds in these States and on the basis of these trials, Government had granted permission for production of these seeds in the country?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) and (b) No, Sir. The Maharashtra Hybrid Seed Company (MAHYCO) has been accorded approval for cultivation of three Bt cotton hybrids in March, 2002 only. The first produce of the approved varieties will come only at the end of Kharif 2000. Hence, the question of rejecting the produce of Bt cotton seeds developed by MAHYCO in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu does not arise.

(c) Yes, Sir. Large scale field trials of Bt hybrids have been carried out in these States by the company as well as by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research. Based on the biosafety assessment and these large scale field trials, the Government has accorded conditional approval for cultivation of three Bt cotton hybrids in the country.'

Teaching of religion in schools

352. SHRI EDUARDO FALEIRO: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Article 28 of the Constitution specifically states that no religious instruction shall be provided in any educational institution, wholly maintained out of State funds; if so, why the NCERT recommended "principles of the major world religions in the curriculum framework 2000";

(b) whether any Board had objected to inclusion of this provision; and

(c) how the NCERT envisages the teaching of major religions in the schools and from where would the teachers come?